



## Congressman Lee M. Zeldin

First Congressional District of New York

May 19, 2022

Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul,

I write to you today to firmly denounce the unjust decision to release the criminals who brutally murdered my constituent Sergeant Hason Correa, a New Yorker, U.S. Army veteran who served in Afghanistan, son, husband and father.

On October 18, 2018, Sergeant Correa and his father, Wesley Correa, were physically assaulted in an apartment building in Harlem by a group of four strangers, who were recorded punching, kicking, stomping and stabbing the victims. Sergeant Correa suffered 11 stab wounds and died as a result of being ruthlessly stabbed in the heart. Meanwhile, his father tried to come to his son's aid, but was restrained, beaten and stabbed 12 times. Wesley miraculously survived the attack but sustained life-threatening injuries that required several emergency surgeries and ultimately left him with life-long disabilities.

Sergeant Correa's mother, Madeline Brame, was heartbroken after the senseless attack on her family. Since then, Madeline made it her life's mission to seek justice for the slaying of her son. The defendants include three siblings, James, Christopher and Mary Saunders, and their accomplice, Travis Stewart. As you know, these violent criminals were all charged with first degree gang assault and second-degree murder in the tragic death of Sergeant Correa and the violent assault of his father. For James, Christopher and Travis, this was not their first felony charged. In fact, all three previously committed violent offenses. At the time of the attack, Christopher was on parole for attempted murder of a police officer.

At first, all the defendants were held at Rikers Island Correctional Facility pending trial. The men were held without being granted bail, while Mary's bail was posted at \$250,000. Over the course of 14 months, Mary's legal team applied for bail reduction, but was denied citing Mary's significant role in the attack. However, on December 18, 2019, then Manhattan Criminal Court Judge Ellen Biben unjustly granted Mary a drastic reduction of her bail on the grounds that she was a mother, had no criminal history and citing the newly implemented "Bail Reform" policy. After Judge Biben consulted with Mary's family about a bail amount they could afford, Mary was released from Rikers Island.



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While Mary was reunited with her family, Sergeant Correa's children were forced to endure the pain of growing up without their father. While Mary was free to care for her children, Sergeant Correa's parents were grieving the loss of their son. While Mary and many other convicted criminals were being granted freedom under the disastrous bail reform, law-abiding citizens were deprived of their freedom to safely walk the streets, ride the subway and more. These outrageous bail "reforms" have only resulted in a broken, deformed criminal justice system in our state. A system that was in place to protect law-abiding citizens now rewards criminals.

The Manhattan District Attorney's office should be ashamed of its disastrous handling of this case. Not only was this case open for nearly four years, the defendants' trials were consistently postponed, adjourned and canceled. Now, the District Attorney's office announced additional misguided decisions to drastically reduce Ms. Saunders' charges and grant Mr. Stewart a lenient seven-year prison sentence, despite the fact that they both committed murder, on the basis of a plea deal. Sergeant Correa had his future stolen from him, and now the criminals who robbed him of living a full life are being handed a free pass. Our communities are experiencing devastating consequences caused by disastrous soft-on-crime policies at the state and local levels.

Law-abiding citizens of New York deserve prosecutors who are capable and willing to uphold the rights granted to us by the United States Constitution. The Correa family deserves justice, and I call on you and your administration to make sure that his killers are prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. In order to prevent additional egregious settlements being made in New York, Alvin Bragg must be immediately fired.

Sincerely,

Lee Zeldin  
Member of Congress